

A LARGE PLACE TO RELIGION.

It has been characteristic of many of God's saints that while they were men of great sins, they gave a large place to religion. Jacob was certainly a man of many shortcomings, measured by Divine or human standards, but it was a redeeming trait in him, that he clung to God, even though his manifestation of God was exceedingly poor.

David was a man that in the light of modern morality, would not stand high, yet he had a consciousness of need, and of God's willingness to supply that we might well envy.

To the Israelitish mind God was more or less localized. In the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple, God was to be found. So when David cries, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord," he is expressing his deepest desire for communion with God. If it be true that this Psalm was written when David was a fugitive from his city, driven out by the rebellion of Absalom, then the wonderful thing is, that he found time to meditate upon this topic. We would imagine amid the plans of the campaign, the disturbances of his new life, he would not be thinking about God or God's house. But it is the mark of the divine life in us that no circumstance can hinder the thought going back to God. The needle may be drawn aside for a moment, but it will tremblingly return to its North Star.

Have we not forgotten the thought on which David dwells, that God's House is the meeting place of the soul and its Lord? We have made the House of God too often a place of amusement of some kind of entertainment, and of such cold instruction, that we have forgotten the idea of worship. David loved the sanctuary because it was the place where he could meet God in the happy relationship of a child, and second, because he met his fellow-saints there in spiritual communion. This leads him to consider the character of the true worshipper. He is one in whom the divine strength is found. His own is weakness, but there is a peculiar power that radiates through his soul that makes him know that God is with him.

His heart becomes the banked highway for of the expression, "in whos heart are ways." the King to enter. For that is the meaning. He is one who finds his life one of useful service. The valley of Baka is the valley of weeping. The English poet speaks of "the vale of tears." The well was always the type of joy. No greater blessing could be bestowed than a well. So the devout Christian is going through the dry valley of sorrow with joy and thanksgiving in his train. The rains cover it with blessings. This world is made happy by the presence of the pious souls. They progress from one stage of strength to another.

The closing strophe is a prayer and a reason, "Hear my cry," not for my sake, but for the sake of the Anointed, who is no less than our all-atoning Saviour. So the heart leaps out in gratitude to God and says, "I would rather be the humblest saint, and occupy the lowest place than to exult in the riches and glories of man." For God illumines our darkness, and protects our weakness. He gives His favor and every good thing in its train.

We wonder if God's people are saying this Psalm to themselves. Is the absence of God a distressing fact in our consciousness? Is He the all important person in our career? Or, does self loom larger than God? Is our strength that divine power which comes when we lay hold of the horns of the altar?

Do the Psalms seem tame to our religious taste? Is this the reason we have dropped them out of our Church music? A. A. L.

Contributed

THE NEW THREE-YEAR PROGRAM OF THE ASSEMBLY FOR STEWARDSHIP.

What the Assembly Did and Did Not Do.

By Rev. M. E. Melvin, D. D.

I. Misapprehension of the New Plan.

The writer has been directed by the new Stewardship Committee to send out to the Church a statement of what is and what is not contemplated, in the new stewardship program of the last Assembly, for the next three years.

Clearly there is a misapprehension as to some features of the new plan, if the conception of three unusually well informed and interested pastors, widely separated, is a fair test of what the Church thinks was done. When the plan was fully explained to them, in each case, unqualified approval was expressed.

II. The Background.

The Progressive Program as we all know it, was not disturbed in the least, and only a small addition made for the last two years of the three. The first year (1922-23) remains as last year, \$4,500,000. The next year the goal is \$4,750,000, and the next \$5,000,000.

We have come by long experience to the full conviction as a Church that we are on the right track in the Progressive Program. Steady growth and all working at it yearly is the right policy.

However, it is also clear, that while the Progressive Program is developing the average giver wonderfully, and has saved our Foreign Mission cause and other causes, and has put our Church to the forefront in giving per capita, it never has and never will adequately reach the giver who can do more than the ordinary. It never can provide for the special needs of the Church in large sums such as College Endowment, Ministerial Relief Endowment, Special Equipment Fund, etc. For example, in a small church in the Synod of Tennessee, the E. M. C. quota is \$275 per year. Recently a man in this church gave \$2,500 to a college endowment fund of the Church. Very likely on the E. M. C. quota he paid, we will say, \$100 and counted this as his part of that fund. This case can be duplicated in practically every church of the Assembly, with some variation. Other and outside causes are constantly appealing to our people. The average E. M. C. quota is not big enough to call for the best that there is in some of our people.

Therefore, in the judgment of a growing number, we must have the special call now and then. But there is a danger here, that of having too many fingers in the pie, too many calls of a special nature over and above the Progressive Program. We are fast drifting into the position of having a number of campaigns going on at the same time in the same territory. There is a growing protest in the Church over the number of campaigns, not the totals.

Therefore, the Assembly of 1920, appreciating this situation, the absolute necessity for the Progressive Program and the need to control the special, appointed an Ad-Interim Committee to study the situation and propose a plan. This committee was headed by Dr. A. D. P. Gilmour and made a unanimous report to the 1921 Assembly. This report was adopted with minor changes.

III. The New Plan Adopted.

In a word, the plan puts under unified control all the financial campaigns of the Church.

It hopes to accomplish for our financial program what the Allies did in unifying the control of their armies. Instead of having several committees of the Church raising funds all at the same time, one committee, to be known in the future as "The Assembly's Stewardship Committee," elected for three years, will direct both the Special Program and the Progressive Program. Very wisely the Assembly made the work of this committee advisory and administrative, and took away from it executive functions. For example, this committee in the future will have nothing to do with nominating Executive Secretaries to the Assembly. The committee is made up of one man from each Synod plus the Moderator, ex-officio. Eight of the 17 must be laymen. After this year, the Synods will nominate to the Assembly men for this committee. This was the old plan and worked well.

As to methods. It is proposed that the Progressive Program shall be operated, as it always has been, using the machinery we have carefully built up. Any funds to be raised, however, in the Special Program, are to be raised through the agency of the field organization, under the Assembly's Committee of Education, which in the past three years has been raising College endowments exclusively. This band of laymen, with a sprinkling of preachers, will be called on to raise the \$5,000,000 Equipment Fund for Foreign Missions and other causes, beginning April 1, 1922. Until that time this organization will remain under the control of the Committee of Education at Louisville, finishing all college campaigns by order of the Assembly by July 1, 1922. At that time it will automatically go under control of the Stewardship Committee and be assigned the task of raising Special Funds, at first the \$5,000,000 Equipment Fund. All such funds will bear their own expenses.

Any Synodical or Presbyterial Campaign may have the use of this field organization when it so requests. Manifestly, the Assembly can not restrict a Synod or Presbytery in such matters, but it is hoped and believed that all Synods needing help will be more than glad to have such an agency at their disposal. For example, when the Equipment Fund is out of the way, the colleges will again be needing help in Synods not yet canvassed.

There are then two lines of work, separate and distinct yet closely related, and each capable of hurting the other unless properly controlled: The Progressive Program and the Special Program.

IV. Advantages Hoped For.

Without adding any more "machinery," or even an extra man, over and above the number now engaged, by simply throwing into gear under one committee, all our various organizations for financial campaigns, it is confidently believed that overlapping of campaigns may be avoided and larger things accomplished. In a judicious way this committee can pick the territory here and there for a Special Fund, waiting on other sections until there is a "recovery" from former efforts. Already two efforts of a small kind have been forestalled in a section where a special is now being pushed.

For the first time in the history of our Church we are now in a position to articulate and co-ordinate the efforts to raise funds, developing the grace of giving in the best way, without the danger of too many appeals. The growth to this has been slow. Many have had a part in it, not the least of whom was the late R. L. Walkup, Secretary of Stewardship, who foresaw the need for this unified control and often spoke of it to friends as the next development in our Stewardship Program.